

# **Breakfast at Tiffany's Study Guide**

## **Breakfast at Tiffany's by Truman Capote**

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



# Contents

<a href="#">Breakfast at Tiffany's Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Pages 1-11.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Pages 11-14.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Pages 14-26.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Pages 26-44.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Pages 44-53.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Pages 53-60.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Pages 60-68.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Summary for pages 69-80.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Pages 80-91.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Pages 92-105.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Social Sensitivity.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Techniques.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Adaptations.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>
<a href="#">Key Questions.....</a>	<a href="#">40</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">42</a>
<a href="#">Literary Precedents.....</a>	<a href="#">43</a>
<a href="#">Related Titles.....</a>	<a href="#">44</a>



Copyright Information.....45



# Plot Summary

Breakfast at Tiffany's is the story of Holly Golightly, a hill-billy turned Manhattan playgirl, and the eclectic circle of friends who surround her. The unnamed narrator of the story is a young writer from a small town, out on his own for the first time. He lives in a New York brownstone and dreams of literary success.

The narrator tells his story in flashbacks, occasionally interjecting comments from his older self. It's clear that even in the present he still thinks about Holly and wonders where she is and what she's doing. There's a feeling of nostalgia in the way he tells the story, as if he were recalling some of the best days of his life.

Before the narrator becomes a close friend of Holly, he is intrigued with her. He can't tell by looking at her whether she is 16 or 30. Men can't help falling in love with her, but she doesn't seem to become really attached to any of them. She throws wild parties in her apartment and takes money from the men who love her. Yet she also has a maternal, caring side to her. She takes care of people and judges them only by the way they treat her. Holly is in a constant state of flux. There is no furniture in her apartment, and most of her belongings are in boxes. She has a cat that she refuses to name and she cannot bear the thought of putting down roots.

Holly visits a man in Sing Sing named Sally Tomato. Tomato's lawyer pays Holly to visit him and deliver and receive messages. Because Mr. Tomato is so kind to Holly, she thinks nothing of this. She assumes he is a lonely old man who just wants some company. The narrator warns her that there could be serious legal ramifications about this, but she doesn't listen to him.

Holly is quite elusive about her past, speaking only of her brother Fred who is in the Army. One day, the narrator sees an older man haunting the brownstone and discovers that this man is Holly's husband. She married him in Texas when she was fourteen years old. Holly gently tells her husband, Doc Golightly, that she can't be with him anymore, and sends him on his way.

Soon after, Holly receives a telegram from Doc informing her that her beloved brother Fred has been killed in the war. She loses control, smashing everything in her apartment, and a doctor comes and gives her a shot that makes her go to sleep. After this episode, Holly settles down. She stays at home, cooks, puts on weight, and buys some furniture. She plans to marry Jose, a Brazilian man of her acquaintance, and she begins making plans.

One day, Holly is arrested for being involved in an international drug ring. The mastermind is Sally Tomato, and Holly has been assisting in the drug ring's communications. Jose cannot bring himself to marry a woman who is a criminal; he's a politician in Latin America. He leaves her without saying good-bye. The narrator, ever loyal, helps Holly to flee the country. She doesn't want to stay in a place where people think ill of her, and she has a free plane ticket to Brazil. The narrator later receives a

postcard from Buenos Aires. He promises to find the cat, which finds a permanent home in the Spanish Harlem.



# Pages 1-11

## Pages 1-11 Summary

The narrator remembers his first apartment in New York City, a shabby brownstone he occupied during the war. Although it was small and gloomy, it brought him great satisfaction because it was his own, and it reminds him of his first ambitions at being a great writer. He also fondly remembers another of the tenants there, Holly Golightly. The narrator and Holly frequented Joe Bell's bar because he took messages for them (they didn't have telephones of their own).

Joe Bell has recently called the narrator and asked him to stop by because he has something to show him. The narrator takes a taxi to Joe Bell's bar on a rainy October day and asks if he's heard from Holly. He hasn't, but a common acquaintance of theirs, Mr. I. Y. Yunioshi, was recently in Africa working as a professional photographer. He was traveling through a small village of no interest when he came across a man carving wood in a doorway. One of the carvings was the spitting image of Holly Golightly's head.

Mr. Yunioshi asked to buy the carved head, but the African man gestured that it was special to him and he didn't want to part with it. No amount of money could convince him to sell it. Mr. Yunioshi had to know the story behind it, and through pidgin English and African and charades, he found out that three white people had appeared in the village last spring on horseback, two men and one woman. The two men were very sick. They stayed in the village until the men were well, during which time the carver became very attached to the woman. When the men were well, they all left.

Joe Bell asks the narrator if he thinks it really was Holly. Joe is positive that Holly is not in New York because he would have seen her. He always keeps an eye out for her. The narrator says he didn't realize Joe was in love with her. Joe says it isn't like that. He's nearly 67 years old.

The rain stops and the narrator leaves. He walks by the brownstone around the corner and notices that the building has been improved since he lived there. All of the tenants have moved on except for one. He walks up the steps and looks at the mailboxes, which reminds him that the mailboxes first made him aware of Holly Golightly.

## Pages 1-11 Analysis

Holly Golightly has not yet appeared in the novel except in the memories of several characters, but already it's apparent that she has enormous power over men. In this short chapter, we see that four very different men are attracted to her: an aged bartender, a young writer, a Japanese photographer, and an African carver. They all feel the loss of her keenly, which leads to her name: Holly Golightly.



In the jungle of Africa, Holly has left such an impression that the carver will not let go of his carving of her for any price. Yet one day she just disappeared. She "went lightly." Likewise, Joe Bell talks about her as if she just disappeared into thin air. She has left no trail behind her. Nobody knows where she is or whether she'll ever reappear again.



# Pages 11-14

## Pages 11-14 Summary

This section is a flashback to the time when the narrator first became aware of Holly Golightly. He'd only been living in the brownstone for a week when he noticed a curious calling card marking the mailbox for Apartment 2. It said, "Miss Holiday Golightly, Traveling."

Long after midnight, the narrator hears a shouted conversation between Miss Golightly and Mr. Yunioshi. Holly has rung his bell to ask him to unlock the door for her because she lost her key. It's clear that this is not the first time Holly has attempted to get into the building by ringing Mr. Yunioshi's bell in the middle of the night. Although Mr. Yunioshi is very angry, Holly quickly wins him over by telling him she'll let him take pictures of her.

The narrator goes out into the hall to get a glimpse of the situation. Holly is wearing a slim black dress, sandals, and a pearl choker. Her age could be anywhere between sixteen and thirty. A plump man in a pin-striped suit is with her; his name is Mr. Arbuck. She thanks him for seeing her home and then slips into her apartment and shuts the door. Mr. Arbuck bangs on the door begging to be let in and reminding her that he picked up the check for five of her friends, but she refuses to let him in.

## Pages 11-14 Analysis

Two of Holly Golightly's traits immediately catch the narrator's attention: her eccentric nature and her power over men. Before the narrator even gets a glimpse of Holly Golightly or hears her voice, he sees her calling card. The card is formal, and expensive, but unconventional: Miss Holiday Golightly, Traveling. It plays over and over in his head, like a catchy tune.

Secondly, the narrator becomes aware of her power over men through the midnight love triangle with Mr. Yunioshi, Holly, and Mr. Arbuck. Unlike normal love triangles, however, the point of contact for both men seems, Holly, seems uninterested in both of the men. It's clear that Holly was interested in Arbuck only because he had money to spend and her friends and her, and she's interested in Yunioshi only because she can use him to let her into the building when she loses her key.





# Pages 14-26

## Pages 14-26 Summary

This section opens the narrator's relationship with Holly Golightly. Holly keeps her promise to Mr. Yunioshi and stops ringing his bell in the middle of the night, but she starts ringing up the narrator to be let into the building when she forgets her keys.

When Holly runs into the narrator during daylight hours, she seems not to notice or recognize him. He sees her at a swanky restaurant one evening at a table surrounded by four men; another night he sees her dancing with Australian army officers on the sidewalk.

Throughout the summer, the narrator watches her closely. From the contents of her garbage can he learns that she smokes Picayunes cigarettes, reads tabloids and astrological charts, eats cottage cheese and Melba toast, and dyes her own hair. He also learns that she has a cat and plays the guitar. After she washes her hair she sits on the fire escape and plays the guitar until her hair dries. She sings show tunes and folk tunes.

One evening in September, Holly climbs through his window from the fire escape to get away from a drunk man. She's wearing only her bathrobe. During their conversation, the narrator admits to being a writer. She thinks he's too young to be a writer and confesses that she loves older men, that she cannot get excited about a man until he's forty-two. Holly tells the narrator that she's going to help him because a great writer because he reminds her of her brother Fred.

She asks for food and he asks her why she left home so young. She promptly changes the subject and asks him to read something he's written, which she then criticizes. It's now 4:30 in the morning and the narrator is exhausted. Holly realizes that it's Thursday, which throws her into despair. She has to get up early on Thursdays to visit a man named Sally Tomato imprisoned at Sing Sing. She's been visiting him every Thursday for seven months. She'd first seen him at Joe Bell's bar, and after he was sent to prison, his lawyer sent for her and offered her \$100 per week if she'd visit him and say she was his niece. The narrator warns her that she could be doing something illegal, but she shrugs it off. She's delivering messages like, "There's a hurricane in Cuba."

The narrator falls asleep and awakes at 6:00 to find her speaking softly to him as if he were her brother Fred, and she's crying. She climbs out the window back to the fire escape.

## Pages 14-26 Analysis

As the narrator gets to know Holly, he's intrigued not only by her eccentricities, but also by her mysterious past. All allusions to her past seem incongruous with her



cosmopolitan, playgirl present. She cries about her brother Fred and sings backwoods folk songs. She can't seem to completely cover up that past, but she doesn't want to talk about it at all.

The conversation Holly has with the narrator about visiting Sally Tomato at Sing Sing shows how naïve she is. It's obvious that she is being used to deliver messages to a mobster in prison, but she only sees him as a sweet, old man who has a crush on her. Even someone who would visit a prisoner just for the money would be somewhat concerned about self-preservation, but Holly thinks nothing of it.

Holly's climbing about on the fire escape alerts the reader to the metaphor of Holly as a cat. She has a cat, which is mentioned in this section, but her behavior is undeniably catlike. Her movements and figure are reminiscent of a cat, but the way she sidles up to strangers and then leaves unexpectedly (out the window) completes the thought.



# Pages 26-44

## Pages 26-44 Summary

The narrator comes home the next day to find a gift basket outside his door with a note from Miss Holiday Golightly apologizing for her intrusion the night before. She promises to not bother him again, and he writes "Please do" on the back of her card and leaves it on her door.

Holly keeps her promise and doesn't disturb the narrator in the middle of the night, and he begins to miss her. He doesn't see her all week, and then sends her a note reminding her that "Tomorrow is Thursday," so she'll remember to go visit Sally Tomato at Sing Sing. She sends him a note thanking him for reminding her and asks him over for drinks.

When he arrives for drinks, hoping to find her alone, he is greeted at the door by an ugly short man who tells him that Holly is in the shower. While Holly finishes showering, the two men converse about whether or not Holly is a phony. The man has apparently known Holly for a long time. He tells the narrator about Benny Polan. Benny wanted to marry Holly, but she wouldn't marry him. The man finally introduces himself as O.J. Berman, a Hollywood actor's agent.

O.J. Berman discovered Holly when she was fifteen years old and living with a jockey in Santa Anita. He gave her French lessons to get rid of her accent and got her a screening for a Cecil B. DeMille film. Then Holly ran away to New York. O.J. tells the narrator that he can't believe she'd throw away a Hollywood career to marry Rusty Trawler. This is the first time the narrator has heard of Rusty Trawler.

Holly appears in a towel, making wet footprints on the floor. Her apartment is filled with unpacked boxes, which the cat rests on. Before Holly returns to the bedroom to get dressed, she tells O.J. to get David O. Selznick's number because she's the narrator's new literary agent, and she wants to send him some of his writing.

By the time Holly has finished dressing, a multitude of people have arrived at her apartment, mostly strangers who have never met, and many of them middle-aged men. One man emerges from the crowd, Rusty Trawler. He is a pudgy, child-like man, Rutherford Trawler. He lost his parents early, and they left him a fortune at the age of five. As a schoolboy he'd had his grandfather arrested on charges of sodomy, and he'd been a celebrity ever since, regularly appearing in the society pages. Rusty has been married and divorced three times. The narrator reads all about Rusty in a scrapbook he finds in Holly's apartment. The scrapbook is filled with newspaper clippings about Rusty.

Holly finds the narrator in a quiet corner and explains why she didn't want to be a movie star and tells him about the mean reds, her term for angst. She says that Rusty recommended smoking marijuana to get rid of the mean reds, but the only solution she



has found is taking a taxi and going to Tiffany's. She says if she could find a real-life place that makes her feel like she feels at Tiffany's, she'd settle down, buy some furniture and name the cat. Rusty comes over to them and announces that he's hungry. Holly pacifies him and sends him away, promising him that they'll go to dinner when his chores are done.

Mag Wildwood arrives at the party. She is over six feet tall and stutters when she talks. Mag is very drunk, and she slides to the floor just after threatening to feed Rusty Trawler to the yak in the zoo. Holly asks the narrator, whom she habitually calls "Fred," to put Mag in a taxi and have her delivered to the Winslow.

## Pages 26-44 Analysis

Holly has created for herself an almost completely rootless life. She has parties with strangers, lives in an apartment full of boxes and devoid of furniture, and has a cat that she refuses to name or "own." This section reveals her past back to the age of fifteen, which reveals little more than we already knew of her. At age fifteen, she was living with a jockey in California when an actor's agent discovered her. But the agent knows nothing of her past, cannot even place her mysterious country accent.

However, Holly admits to the narrator that if she could find a place where she could escape her mental anxiety, she would settle down and really live. She thinks Mexico might be a good place, and she wants to find a place where her brother Fred would be happy. All her wanderlust seems to focus on getting enough money to find such a place, which she expects to cost a lot.

Tiffany's is mentioned in this section as a place where she feels content. She doesn't think it's appropriate for a woman her age to wear diamonds. Therefore, she's again putting her contentment way out into the future. She daydreams of something unreachable for the present time, something she couldn't possibly lay her hands on.



## Pages 44-53

### Pages 44-53 Summary

Holly is angry with the narrator the next morning because instead of putting Mag in a taxi and sending her home, he put a pillow under her head and let her sleep in Holly's apartment on the floor. A Latin man arrives at the apartment looking for Mag Wildwood. He looks like a bullfighter but wears a crisp English suit.

Later, the narrator overhears a conversation between Mag and Holly. They're talking about soldiers, and Holly mentions that Fred is a soldier. Mag thinks Holly is talking about the narrator, but she's really talking about her brother. Holly says the narrator is yearning to be on the inside looking out, and she says that her brother is stupid. They talk about Jose, the Latin man, and we learn that Mag is going to marry him and move to Brazil.

Mag moves in with Holly. The narrator receives a letter informing him that a small university review is going to publish one of his stories. Giddy with excitement, he runs up to Holly's door. He shows her the letter, and she tells him he shouldn't let them publish it, not without paying him. He's disappointed by her reaction, but she gets dressed and takes him out for lunch to celebrate.

They go to Joe Bell's for drinks and then eat lunch at the cafeteria in the park. They behave like children in the park, running, singing, sitting on the railings at the boat house. He asks her if it's true that she's been on her own since she was fourteen. She admits that it is true, which reminds her that she wants to buy some peanut butter to send to her brother Fred. After that, they go to Woolworths because Holly wants to steal something. They put Halloween masks on their faces and run out of the store and wear them all the way home.

### Pages 44-53 Analysis

An important object comes up several times in these pages. Cages are mentioned several times, and they are used as a metaphor for Holly's previous life. When Holly and the narrator go to the park, they avoid the zoo because Holly can't bear to see anything living in a cage. Also, when they walk by the beautiful bird cage in the shop window, Holly says, "But still, it's a cage."

She has broken free of whatever cage it was that previously held her, but she hasn't yet landed anywhere. Her entire apartment is boxed, ready to go at a moment's notice, and yet she has such maternal instincts to take care of people and things. It's easy to forget how young she is as she soothes the nerves and worries of characters far older than her.



## Pages 53-60

### Pages 53-60 Summary

Holly and the narrator have a lot of fun together over the next few weeks until the narrator gets a job. Then their schedules are completely different. Holly spends most of her time with Rusty Trawler, Mag Wildwood, and Jose Ybarra-Jaegar (his mother was German). They make an odd quartet, but they spend all their idle time together.

One day, the narrator sees Holly slip out of a taxi and run up the steps of the public library. Curious as to why Holly would go to a library, he follows her in and finds her at a table, surrounded by a fortress of books where she is laboriously writing with a pencil. Watching her reminds the narrator of a girl he knew in school, Mildred Grossman. Mildred was unkempt and unattractive, but somehow there is a connection between these two. After Holly leaves, the narrator goes over to the table to see what kinds of books she's been reading. They're all about Brazil and politics in Latin America.

On Christmas Eve, Mag and Holly give a party, and the narrator arrives early to help decorate the huge Christmas tree they've managed to squeeze into the apartment. She tells him there's a present for him in the bedroom; it's the beautiful birdcage he's admired for months. She makes him promise he'll never put a living thing in it. He gives her a St. Christopher's medal he'd bought for her at Tiffany's. The narrator has carried the birdcage all over the world with him, but mentions that he doesn't think of Holly when he looks at it because they had a big falling out.

In February, Holly goes on a trip with Rusty, Mag, and Jose, during which she aligns herself with Jose. When she returns, she sits with the narrator in her apartment. It is March now, and the Christmas tree is still standing. Holly asks the narrator to rub oil on her back. She tells him that O.J. Berman is in town and that she gave him the narrator's story. She says that O.J. likes him as a writer but that he needs to write about more meaningful things. She thinks he should write something like *Wuthering Heights*. He's offended by her criticism and he insults her by saying Rusty Trawler isn't worth the money she's extracting from him. She tells him to leave.

### Pages 53-60 Analysis

Holly's concession in buying the birdcage for the narrator shows that she's willing to accept other people's viewpoints. She still doesn't like the idea of the cage, but she understands that he thinks it's beautiful, and she wants him to be happy .

When the narrator's schedule no longer fits with her own night-owl schedule, however, they drift apart. Holly is unwilling to adapt to anyone else. Instead of adapting her schedule to fit the friendship, she mostly drops the friendship and attaches herself to those who can live on her terms. Her need to be free extends to all areas of her life: living conditions, friendships, morals, customs, and economics. The problems created

by such lack of structure, though, cross over the lines between these areas and conflict with her desire to take care of people.



## Pages 60-68

### Pages 60-68 Summary

The narrator takes the \$350 birdcage and leaves it in front of her door. The next morning he finds it in the garbage heap in front of the building and sheepishly retrieves it and puts it back in his room. They don't speak to each other for a while. In April, the narrator notices a man in his fifties lingering around the building, fingering the calling card on Holly's mailbox, and staring up at her windows. The narrator becomes concerned, wondering if the man is a detective or connected with Sally Tomato.

The narrator overhears the man whistling one of the prairie tunes Holly plays on her guitar, and he approaches the man and asks what he wants. The man says he needs a friend. They have lunch together. The man pulls a faded family picture out of his wallet and points out himself, Holly, and her brother Fred. He guesses that the man is Holly's father, but the man says he is her husband and that her name is Lulamae Barnes Golightly. He says the children in the picture are Lulamae's children. She is their step-mother, even though she is only "going on fourteen" in the picture.

Doc Golightly explains that their hearts were all broken when Lulamae ran off. One of his daughters had discovered Lulamae and Fred stealing milk and turkey eggs one morning. Doc Golightly took them in. He felt so sorry for them, all alone in the world. As Lulamae plumped up and got comfortable, Doc fell in love with her. He taught her to play the guitar. Fred stayed with them until he went into the Army. Fred wrote to Doc telling him of Holly's address, and that's when he decided to come find her.

The narrator tells Doc that he might find Lulamae somewhat changed. Doc doesn't want to scare her off, so he asks the narrator to be his friend and inform her that he's here. Doc brushes off his clothes and tries to make himself look nice. The narrator goes up to Holly's room and calls her "Lulamae." She assumes that Fred has arrived and runs down the stairs to find him. She sees Doc and he swoops her up in a giant bear hug.

### Pages 60-68 Analysis

This section explains a great deal about Holly and why she is the way she is, but it doesn't mark the denouement of the story because it's unclear what Holly will do now that her worlds have collided. It's appropriate that the narrator and Doc meet outside, and that Doc feels he can confide in the narrator and use him as a friend because the narrator seems to understand Holly, perhaps because he is a writer or maybe because he is young and on his own for the first time.

Doc Golightly's story about finding Lulamae and Fred completely destitute and hungry softens the narrator's heart toward Holly. It's clear that Doc is kind and loving and generous, but it's also clear that Holly felt trapped in her situation, indebted to the man



who took her and her beloved brother in, but still so young and so free-spirited by nature.

Their reunion on the staircase is full of tension. The worlds are colliding, and the result of the collision will not be happy for everyone. This point marks the emotional climax of the story. The tension is relieved somewhat by the comments of one of the tenants, Madame Sapphia Spanella: "Shut up! It's a disgrace. Do your whoring elsewhere."



## Summary for pages 69-80

### Summary for pages 69-80 Summary

The narrator and Holly are sitting at Joe Bell's bar on Sunday morning. Holly is drinking, despite Joe Bell's reluctance to give her any alcohol in the morning. Holly doesn't think her marriage to Doc was legal because she was so young, but she feels that she owes him a lot for taking her in and giving her confidence. She tells the narrator about her night. She says Doc thought she would return to Tulip, Texas, with him right up until he got on the bus at the bus station.

Holly advises Joe Bell against loving a wild thing. She tells him that the more you love a wild thing the stronger it gets until it can fly away. Then you end up just staring at the sky. Holly then says that it's better to look at the sky than to live there, that it's a very empty place. As he listens to her, Joe thinks she's drunk.

Rusty Trawler marries Mag Wildwood. After reading this news on the subway, the narrator arrives home to sounds of crashes in the apartment. Madame Spanella is shouting, "She is killing somebody!" The narrator pounds on Holly's door, which makes the crashing stop. She won't answer the door. Then Jose Ybarra-Jaegar arrives with a key to her door and opens it. Jose has a doctor with him who gives Holly a shot to make her sleep. The narrator asks Jose why she would go so crazy over Rusty's marriage to Mag. Jose shows the narrator a telegram: "Received notice young Fred killed in action overseas stop your husband and children join in the sorrow of our mutual loss stop letter follows love Doc."

Holly never mentions Fred again except for once. She also stops calling the narrator Fred. All during the summer she stays in her apartment. Her hair darkens, she gains weight, and she grows careless about the way she dresses. Jose moves in with her, although he spends three days a week in Washington. The narrator thinks that Holly seems more content now. She begins furnishing her apartment and cooking meals. She also starts trying to learn Portuguese from phonographs. She is planning on marrying Jose and moving to Rio, even though Jose has never mentioned marriage himself.

The end of that summer is sweet for the narrator and Holly. They have reached the point in their friendship where they really understand each other and communicate in silence as well as in words. They spend entire evenings walking around New York and saying very little. The narrator is getting very jealous of Jose.

### Summary for pages 69-80 Analysis

Once Fred is killed in action, Holly can no longer live in the sky. She has dreamt of providing Fred a place where he can spend time with his horses and be happy. She has wanted to take Fred to Mexico and give him everything he wants. But when the need to

take care of her brother is gone Holly finds herself coming down from the sky and settling on earth.

Instead of looking for a family and home, she just settles on what is before her: her current apartment and Jose. She starts cooking, decorating, learning his language, and planning to marry him and have a large family before anything is final. The narrator, who has always loved her, feels that he should be the one she settles on, and he feels left out when she talks about going to Brazil and marrying Jose. She has lost some of her glamor-girl appeal, but the narrator is all the more intrigued by her.



# Pages 80-91

## Pages 80-91 Summary

It's September 30th, the narrator's birthday, and Holly asks him to go horseback riding around the park. She tells him that she's leaving for Brazil in a week, so she has to say good-bye to her favorite horse. The narrator feels desolate about this news. She talks about all the people she will miss: Joe Bell, Sally Tomato. She says that when she went to see Mr. Tomato last he said it was for the best that she would be leaving the country because there might be trouble. They mount their horses and the horses take off. The narrator has no control over his horse, and soon policemen are chasing him to try and slow it down. The narrator falls off his horse and Holly gets him into a taxi. He claims she saved his life.

That evening there are pictures of Holly on the late edition of the newspaper. It turns out that Sally Tomato has been using Holly to assist his international drug-smuggling racket. The arrest takes place in the narrator's bathroom. The narrator is soaking in his bathtub laced with Epsom salts, and Holly is on hand to rub him with liniment and tuck him into bed when a pair of detectives is let into his room by Madame Spanella. As the detectives take Holly away, she instructs the narrator to feed the cat.

That night, at the bar, Joe Bell is very agitated about Holly's arrest. Joe and the narrator try to think of who they can call to bail her out. The narrator calls O.J. Berman in California, who is having a massage and is upset about the disruption. He suggests that the narrator call Rusty. Mag gets on the phone and tells the narrator that they will sue anyone who tries to connect their good names with Holly. Finally, the narrator gets hold of O.J. Berman again, and this time O.J. arranges for someone to pay for her bail.

The next morning, the narrator crawls through the fire escape window in Holly's apartment to feed the cat. Jose's cousin is in the apartment packing Jose's things into a suitcase. The cousin asks the narrator if he will deliver a letter to Holly.

## Pages 80-91 Analysis

This section accentuates another of Holly's character traits: her tendency to see the good in people. Even after her arrest, she still tries to convince others that Sally Tomato is a kind-hearted old man. She has always seen him that way, and no amount of persuasion by others will convince her that he's something else. Holly also continues to show her maternal side when she commands the narrator to please feed the cat as the detectives take her away from her building.

Her loyalty can be contrasted with the disloyalty of her acquaintances in this section. She has become very loyal to Jose, but when she gets in trouble with the law, he immediately deserts her, even going so far as to send someone else to get his things and hand her a letter. She has been mostly loyal to Rusty and Mag, but when she

needs their help they turn on her as well. However, she still has friends in O.J. Berman, Joe Bell, and the narrator.



# Pages 92-105

## Pages 92-105 Summary

When the narrator finally gets to see Holly two mornings later, she is sitting in a hospital room and looks about twelve years old. She asks about Jose, and although he has wanted to rip up his letter to spare her, he hands it over. Before she reads the letter, she puts on lipstick, eye shadow, perfume, pearl earrings, and her dark glasses. After she reads the letter she lights a cigarette and hands it to the narrator to read and then asks him what he thinks of it.

Jose says that he has to protect his family and his name, and that is why he cannot marry her. The narrator is quick to condemn Jose, but Holly says he's not a King Kong-type rat like Rusty, just a regular rat. The narrator tells her they should make plans. Holly says she wants to sleep for a few days and then go to Brazil. She has a paid-for plane ticket, which she'd rather not waste, so she might as well use it. Holly doesn't want to stick around and have to testify against Sally Tomato. Everyone in the neighborhood knows about her arrest. She wants to go somewhere new. Before she'll let him leave, Holly instructs the narrator to find her a list of the fifty richest men in Brazil and to go to her apartment and get the St. Christopher's cross he gave her for Christmas.

Saturday is the day of Holly's departure. She has asked the narrator to get everything ready for her. He carries her belongings, including the cat, out onto the fire escape and then down to Joe Bell's bar in the rain. Holly meets her friends at the bar, and Joe Bell won't even speak to her, he's so upset about her departure. However, he hires a limousine to take her to the airport. Then he hands her a bouquet of flowers and then hurries off to the bathroom to vomit. The narrator goes in the limousine with her. She orders the driver to stop the car next to an alley. She takes the cat, says good-bye, and drops him in the alley, telling him to go. After a block, she gets out of the car and runs back looking for the cat in the pouring rain. She realizes that they did belong to each other. The narrator promises that he'll come back and look for the cat and take care of him.

Over time, the authorities stop looking for Holly. On Christmas Day, Sally Tomato dies from a heart attack at Sing Sing, so the news story is revived for a little while. A new tenant moves into Holly's apartment. His name is Quaintance Smith, and he entertains just as much as Holly did. In the spring, the narrator receives a postcard from Holly. She is living in Buenos Aires and in love with a man who has a wife and seven children. She doesn't leave an address, though, and he has so many things he wants to tell her, that he's sold more stories, heard that the Trawlers are counter-suing for divorce, and most of all that he has found her cat. It took weeks of searching the Spanish Harlem streets, but he found him sitting in a sunny window surrounded by potted plants and clean lace curtains. The cat has found a place to belong, and he hopes Holly has, too.



## Pages 92-105 Analysis

As a loyal friend, the narrator helps Holly in her flight from New York, even though he would rather have her stay. He knows that she has not found her longed-for home in New York, but he hopes she has somewhere. The cat, which symbolizes Holly, has found a home, and this gives him hope.

In the end, the two main characters, Holly and the narrator, have changed in some ways, but they have also stayed the same. The narrator has gained confidence in himself, partly because of Holly's gentle criticism of his stories. This confidence has helped him to publish a couple more stories.

Holly is more grounded than she was at the beginning of the story. Losing her brother forces her to face reality in some regards, and telling Doc that they can't be together helps her to move away from the past. Still, she can't help wandering and chasing after rich men. Doc gave her the wings to fly, and it seems that she can't come down.



# Characters

## Narrator

The narrator is a young, ambitious writer. Holly calls says he is yearning to be on the inside looking out. When he first meets Holly he is thrilled just to have his own apartment, even if it is dingy and junky and old. The narrator is sensitive about his stories, pricked by any criticism, and full of hope. The narrator is never called by his real name in the book. The only name he receives is "Fred," which Holly calls him because he reminds her of her brother.

Although the narrator gets annoyed with Holly sometimes, he is very loyal to her. He stands by her even when she is arrested on drug charges, visiting her in the hospital and moving her things out of her apartment through the fire escape in the pouring rain. He is humbled by her, thrilled to be in her presence, and willing to do anything for her. However, he has a sense of reality. He knows that she could turn on him at any time, and he doesn't fall as head-over-heels in love with her as some of the other men in the book, especially Joe Bell.

The narrator is open-minded, which is why Holly's husband Doc feels that he can trust him. Doc knows that the narrator will act as a friend in his behalf. This character trait allows the author to intertwine the narrator in all the important relationships in the book. If the narrator were more narrow-minded, he couldn't give an objective account of all the major characters.

## Holly Golightly

Although her real name is Lulamae Barnes, the readers know this character as Holly Golightly. When the narrator first encounters Holly, he reads her Tiffany calling card: Holiday Golightly, Traveling. It sounds like a catchy tune to him and goes round and round in his head. Lulamae Barnes was a destitute southern girl who was taken in by Doc Golightly's family. Under his care, she bloomed and became healthy and strong. Doc fell in love with her and married her when she was fourteen. She ran away from home and went to California, where an actor's agent named O.J. Berman discovered her and got her some screen auditions. She decided that acting wasn't for her and ran away to New York.

This is where Holly enters the story. She lives off of the goodwill of the men who fall in love with her. She is beautiful and eccentric. She seems to have no inhibitions and cares more for her brother Fred than for anything else in the world. She can't stand the thought of being trapped in a cage and even bypasses the zoo in Central Park so she won't have to see the animals in the cages. Holly has a cat, but she refuses to name him because she will not "own" another living creature.





When Fred is killed in the war, Holly falls apart but lands on her feet more grounded, it seems. She wants to marry her friend Jose, but when she gets caught up in the Sally Tomato scandal, Jose leaves her and returns to Brazil. Instead of settling down with her other friends, Holly leaves the country. The narrator can only hope that she has finally found a home.

## **Doc Golightly**

Holly's husband Doc Golightly is a simple man from Tulip, Texas. He is obviously very kind. He loves Holly very much and wants her to be happy. He has a kindly face and talks very earnestly and genuinely. He has outlived a wife and has many children that he's raised on his own. Holly was only fourteen years old when she married him, and yet he continues to talk about her children, which are really her step-children, some as old as she is. It's difficult to understand Doc's motives in marrying a girl so young and putting her in the position of being a mother to so many children. Doc seems to have pure motives, but the effect of this marriage has not been good for Holly.

## **O.J. Berman**

O.J. Berman is an actor's agent in Hollywood who discovers Holly at age fifteen when she is living with a jockey in California. He gives her French lessons to get rid of her awful accent and helps get her screen auditions. Even after she stiffs him by running away to New York right before an audition for a Cecil B. DeMille movie, O.J. still cares about her. He visits her in New York, trying to get her to reconsider, and when she is arrested in the drug scandal, he has someone bail her out.

## **Jose Ybarra-Jaegar**

A beautiful, neat man, Jose looks like a bull-fighter, but he's really a politician. He spends several days every week in Washington, D.C., but when he's not working he hangs out with Holly and her friends. On a winter trip, Jose and Holly discover a mutual attraction, and after they return to New York, Jose moves in to Holly's apartment. He's very concerned about his reputation and appearance, so when Holly shows up on the front page of the newspaper, he leaves her immediately.

## **Mag Wildwood**

Mag Wildwood is a woman of Amazonian proportions. She's a magazine model and a friend of Holly's. She has a drinking problem, which is apparent the first time she appears in the story, at a party in Holly's apartment. Later on, Mag moves in to Holly's apartment, but they don't always get along, and Mag ends up sleeping on a cot among Holly's boxes. Later, Mag marries Rusty Trawler, a longtime friend of Holly's. But the marriage ends in a bitter divorce.



## **Rusty Trawler**

Rusty Trawler is a New York socialite. He was orphaned at the age of five, which made him an instant millionaire. He is described as an overgrown baby. He's pudgy, whiny, and difficult to be around. Holly babies Rusty, soothing him and giving in to most of his self-centered whims. Towards the beginning of the story it's apparent that she plans to marry him for his money. That way she can buy a farm in Mexico where her brother Fred can be happy and live with his horses. Rusty marries Mag Wildwood after the foursome (Holly, Rusty, Mag, and Jose) come back from their winter trip. His marriage to Mag is his fourth marriage, and it ends in divorce just like the rest of them.

## **Joe Bell**

Joe Bell owns the bar where the main characters hang out. He loves Holly fiercely, and at the end when she leaves for Brazil, he rents a limousine to take her to the airport and hands her a bunch of flowers. Joe is one of the first characters we meet in the story. He thinks he has found out that Holly is living in an African village because of a carved wooden head that looks just like her.

## **Madame Sapphia Spanella**

Madame Spanella lives in the brownstone, and hates Holly from the very beginning. She's always calling Holly names and trying to get her evicted. In fact, it's Madame Spanella who gets Holly arrested in the end. It's clear in the wrap-up, though, that Madame Spanella is more jealous of Holly than concerned about morals because the man who moves in to Holly's apartment after Holly leaves is very much a playboy, having loud parties to rival any Holly has ever had, and Madame Spanella babies him and gives him steaks to put on his black eyes.

## **Sally Tomato**

Sally Tomato is a habitual criminal living in Sing Sing. His lawyer pays Holly to send and deliver messages about their international drug ring. Sally is a very minor character in the story, but he's very influential in Holly's fate.



## Objects/Places

### Cat

The cat that lives with Holly represents her and her feelings of home. She just found the cat out in the street one day and it followed her home. Holly has refused to name the cat because she doesn't feel she has the right to own a living thing. This reflects her feelings about Doc Golightly. When she left Doc she changed her name as a part of leaving her old life where she felt cooped up and "owned." At the end of the story when Holly and the narrator are driving in the limousine to the airport, Holly gets out of the limousine and tells the cat to go. The cat slinks away into an alleyway. Holly feels awful about this because she realizes at that moment that she and the cat really do belong together, and she fears that she'll never understand love until she's gotten rid of it. The narrator promises her that he'll find the cat, and he does find it in a nice home in Spanish Harlem. Since the cat has found a home, he hopes Holly has, too.

### Cage

There is a gilded birdcage in a shop window near the brownstone that the narrator admires. Holly thinks it's terrible that he'd love something that is meant for cage living creatures, but she buys it for him as a Christmas present, even though it costs \$350. When the narrator and Holly have a falling out over her criticism of his story and her friendship with Rusty Trawler, the narrator puts the cage in front of her door. Later he finds the cage in the garbage out on the street. Feeling guilty, he takes the cage back and keeps it forever, even carrying it on all of his worldwide travels throughout his career.

### Glasses

Holly's one physical flaw is that she wears very thick glasses. When she's not wearing them she squints hard, just to make out what's in front of her. The need for such thick glasses represents her warped sense of reality. Because of her destitute childhood and then her early marriage and family with Doc, she doesn't see things clearly, which leads to poor judgment and eccentricities.

### Brownstone

The New York brownstone that has been apportioned into apartments is the place where most of the action takes place. The narrator and Holly Golightly live in separate apartments in the brownstone. The brownstone means freedom to both of these characters. For the narrator, the brownstone is freedom from the small town he grew up in, freedom to write whatever he wants to, and for Holly it is freedom from poverty and Doc.



## Joe Bell's Bar

Joe Bell's bar is a place for loyal friends. The friends who congregate in the bar are the ones who care most about Holly. Her shallow friends, Rusty, Mag, and Jose, don't go to Joe's bar because it isn't as fancy or upscale as their taste requires. But Holly, the narrator, and Joe relax there and can be themselves.

## Guitar

The narrator notices early on in his friendship with Holly that she likes to play the guitar. She's not very good at it, but after she washes her hair she likes to sit out on the fire escape and strum the guitar and sing prairie songs or show tunes while her hair dries. Later on, he learns from Doc Golightly, that she learned to play the guitar from Doc. She uses the guitar to hold on to her past and especially to her brother Fred.

## Horses

Holly loves horses because her brother Fred loves horses. She goes to the stables near the park to ride them, and right before she gets arrested, she takes the narrator out for a horse ride, which ends in disaster when some kids spook the horses and take them on a wild ride through New York before the narrator falls off his horse. Horses are reminiscent of Holly because they run so fast and are free.

## Sing Sing

Holly's only real schedule commitment is her weekly Thursday appointment at Sing Sing to visit Sally Tomato. She does it not only for the money, but also because she feels sorry for Sally. She notices that the people who come to visit their loved ones in prison put on their best faces, dress up, and try to be cheerful for one another, but then she sees their downcast faces as they have to leave. These observations show the compassionate side of Holly's nature.

## Tiffany's

Tiffany's is a place where Holly goes when she is feeling the "mean-reds," her term for what the narrator calls angst. Everything is so perfect and smells so lovely at Tiffany's. If Holly can only find a place that makes her feel the way Tiffany's does, she says she'll buy some furniture and give the cat a name. Tiffany's is an ideal place where Holly thinks a person could never feel angry or sad. It's an illusion.

## **Tulip, Texas**

Tulip, Texas is the place where Doc lives and where he and Lulamae (Holly) were married. To Doc, Tulip is a wonderful, homey place where life is predictable and pleasant. To Holly, Tulip is a prison where she isn't free to be herself.



## Social Sensitivity

Written in 1958, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* reflects the emerging concerns of postwar America and looks forward to the turbulent 1960s. In the late 1950s, Congress had turned its attention from subversives to the Mafia, and hearings revealed both the Mafia's role in the distribution of drugs and its infiltration of cafe society. Truman Capote's Holly Golightly eventually is caught up in this scandal. Her benefactor, "Sally" Tomato, is a Mafia kingpin imprisoned at Sing Sing. Asked to make an old man happy by visiting him each Thursday morning, Holly agrees, not realizing that Sally and his henchman Oliver O'shaughnessy are using her to deliver messages concerning the drug trade. At the novel's climax, she is arrested, and the ensuing scandal not only makes her a social pariah, but literally costs her everything.

Holly's attitude toward conventional morality also reflects the sexual revolution that was in its early stages in 1958; she discusses prostitution and homosexuality in a matter-of-fact way, suggesting both provide advantages to everyone concerned. While Holly is certainly not the first prostitute to be portrayed sympathetically, both the author and his narrator seem to accept and even admire the way she has used men financially in order to create her identity and maintain her life style. Those characters who condemn her are seen as despicable, selfrighteous, and hypocritical. In contrast, Capote emphasizes Holly's innocence and her integrity. She explains to the narrator that she always manages to "like" the men in her life; even when they are "rats," she tells herself that she actually likes rats. Not surprisingly, then, when she finds out that Sally Tomato has taken advantage of her naivete, she remains loyal to him, insisting that he has always been kind to her, and refusing to cooperate with the police against him.

# Techniques

In this novel, as in most of Capote's novels, symbols play a significant role.

The first of these is the African statue in the photograph taken by I. Y. Yunioshi, Holly's former neighbor. This wood sculpture, which combines the elongated head of the primitive style with Holly's facial characteristics, suggests her role as the feminine ideal, not only for civilized men like Joe Bell and the American photographer, but also for primitive artists like the African woodcarver. Holly's power to inspire art is further seen in this novel which, for the narrator, constitutes an attempt to understand Holly's personality and her appeal to almost all types of men.

A second symbol is the ornate birdcage which the narrator admires and Holly buys for him. The narrator considers this cage another work of art, but for Holly it represents a loss of freedom. Thus, she cannot appreciate the inherent beauty of the object, and when the narrator angrily returns it to her, she shows her disregard for both its artistic and its monetary value as she simply tosses it on the trash heap.

The narrator, whose values differ radically from hers, retrieves it, however.

The impermanence of Holly's life is seen in the way her apartment is furnished; she seems to be literally in transit—traveling. Suitcases and unpacked crates are the only furniture. The crates serve as tables to hold drinks, a lamp, a bowl of flowers, and the cat. Holly refuses to buy actual chairs and tables until she has found a place where she believes she belongs. Likewise, the cat has no name because Holly is unwilling to accept the responsibility of even that degree of commitment to another living creature.

As in most Capote novels, color symbolism is markedly present. Holly is repeatedly associated with color, from the bowl of yellow roses in her apartment to her red cat and her white-satin bed. Primarily, though, she is linked to the emotion that she calls "the mean reds," her term for deep depression, a feeling that can be dispelled only by breakfast at Tiffany's. Her most intense experiences with "the mean reds" occur when she receives the news of her brother's death and again when she suffers a miscarriage. She tells the narrator that on the latter occasion she came very near death, or as she says, "the fat lady nearly got her."

Tiffany's itself is an important symbol in the novel. For Holly this store represents the stability, status, and taste that she wants in her life. She has spent hours outside the store, looking in, and while she tells the narrator she has bought calling cards there because she feels a kind of debt to Tiffany's, the cards are an expression of hope, as is the symbolically appropriate St. Christopher medal the narrator later buys for her there.

# Themes

## Freedom

The theme of freedom continually touched on throughout the story as Holly and the narrator both push the boundaries of their freedom and then wonder how much freedom is too much. Holly has come from a background where poverty and a lack of parental guidance forced too much too soon on her. When she is taken in by Doc Golightly, she experiences a serious lack of freedom. She is suddenly given too much responsibility: the duties of a wife and mother at too tender an age. The constriction sends her fleeing, and she runs away in search of freedom.

Her new life in New York is as free as possible. She doesn't confine herself to a schedule, a moral code, commitments, lasting friendships, even a regular home. With all boundaries thrown off, Holly lives a wayfaring existence. She survives on cottage cheese and Melba toast, hardly ever does her laundry, never knows where her keys are, and depends on virtual strangers for money and favors. Her life is dissatisfying and leads to frequent episodes of "the mean reds," which send her to Tiffany's in search of some peace and order. Ironically, it seems that what she loves about Tiffany's is the orderliness and beauty. Her own dirty apartment with no furniture and piles of boxes, which represents freedom to her, makes her crazy and sends her in search of order.

The narrator has also left a very orderly life in a small town where he felt that he didn't have enough freedom. In New York, with all the freedom of his first time away from home, he bounces around from job to job, looking for elusive publications and having his pride hurt. He is surprised at Holly's complete abandon of social mores, crawling through strange men's windows in the middle of the night to escape the affronts of other strange men. He indulges in the freedom, though, even shoplifting with Holly for a good time. In the end, after Holly is gone, he still tends more toward an anarchistic living style than an orderly one.

## Loyalty

Loyalty is a theme that weaves through the story as characters depend on and then abandon one another. When we first meet Holly, she seems to be using character after character to support her playgirl lifestyle and meet her own needs. As we get to know her better, however, we see that she is loyal to those who care about her. She is loyal to the narrator when she buys him the bird cage she despises because she knows he fancies it. She is also loyal to him when she rescues him after he falls off the horse the day she is arrested. In return, he is loyal to her when he visits her in the hospital and then carries her belongings out the window onto the fire escape in the pouring rain to help her flee the country after her arrest. Joe Bell and O.J. Berman, as well as Doc Golightly, also show their loyalty to Holly and to others.





On the other hand, there are many disloyal characters in the book. Holly may be the principle disloyal character as she turns her back on friends for small or nonexistent reasons. Rusty Trawler is the king of disloyal characters. His many divorces and completely selfish attitude make it seem impossible for him to be loyal to anyone. He seems to base his friendships solely on what others can do for him. Jose and Mag are also disloyal. They are fair-weather friends.

Although Holly is flighty, she does seem to be loyal in her heart. She is loyal to Doc in her heart if not in her actions. She does not stay with him, but she cares about him and won't allow anyone to speak ill of him. She is also loyal in her heart to her true friends. This creates a difficult position for her friends who would like to have her around.

## Perfection

Tiffany's is the epitome of perfection in the story. At Tiffany's, nothing is dirty and everything is beautiful. Everything is in order, and all of the people are accommodating and kind and eager to serve. This is the life Holly wants, a life of perfection. This life is, of course, unattainable, but Holly keeps searching for it.

This wanderlust for perfection sends her all over the world. It's obvious that she will never be satisfied. When the narrator receives a postcard from Holly, she has already left Rio having not found perfection there, and she's gone to Buenos Aires where she's found a man that she thinks might be the perfect one. Of course, with her track record, the narrator and we readers know that Buenos Aires won't be perfect either. Her life has been so messy previously that she's looking for that Tiffany's perfection. Of course, you can't live at Tiffany's, let alone eat breakfast there, but that's what Holly thinks she needs.

## Significant Topics

The primary theme of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is the search for connections with people and places; the outsider stands with nose pressed against the glass, wanting what is inside. As the narrator—now a New York insider—describes his first New York apartment, it is far from luxurious or elegant, but for him it is associated with personal freedom. Here he began his career as a writer, and here he became acquainted with Holly Golightly.

If he considers himself settled in his apartment, Holly is precisely the opposite; she is the perpetual outsider, marginally accepted, but never quite belonging.

The card on her door reads "Miss Holiday Golightly, Traveling," and her apartment is furnished with packing crates.

She refuses to "own" anything, even her cat, until she believes she is settled. The narrator cannot pinpoint her place of origin, and eventually he learns that she has lived in Texas, California, Brazil, Argentina, and perhaps even Africa. So far as he can



determine, years later when he writes about her, she may still be traveling, looking for the place she can make her permanent home. In contrast, the narrator seems to consider himself settled in New York.

Holly's connections with people likewise seem less than permanent. Before she and the narrator become acquainted, she seems to have no friends; a variety of wealthy men visit her, but she keeps all of them at an emotional distance, apparently more interested in the money they can supply than in their company. In the same way, she uses the other residents of the apartment building, ringing their doorbells frequently and at any hour, whenever she loses her door key. The narrator discovers that her only real loyalty is to her brother, Fred; yet she left him behind, too, when she left Doc Golighdy in Tulip, Texas.

Holly has created her own identity, in which personal freedom is an important component. She tells the narrator that she hates cages of any kind, and Doc Golighdy explains that she is actually a "wild thing" named Lulamae Barnes, who appeared at his farm as a starving fourteen-year-old. He took in this waif and her brother, and he soon married her, but she was not content to be a wife and stepmother; he says she kept looking at the sky, until eventually she decided to try to live there. Thus, each day she walked a little farther down the road; then one day she simply did not come back. Even though Doc insists she is still his wife, Holly tells the narrator that such a marriage cannot be legally binding, and she has conveniently ignored it as she has tried out other roles such as Hollywood starlet, New York "escort," and surrogate niece of Sally Tomato. In each of these identities, Holly is looking for her home—the place she belongs—and a family, people with whom she belongs. Briefly she seems to find a surrogate brother in the person of the narrator and a potential husband in Jose Ybarra-Jaegar, whom she pictures as the father of the many children she intends to bear. When this dream fails, Holly reverts to the role of traveler and is thought to have been spotted in a remote African village, no doubt the appropriate destination for a "wild thing."



# Style

## Point of View

The story is told from the first-person point of view by an unnamed narrator who is in the midst of the action. He is looking back at the story from some time and distance, so it's obvious that he's older and wiser than when the story took place. The narrator is an open-minded and innocent character, and this helps him to be involved with more of the characters. The other characters trust the narrator, telling him things that are important to the plot and character development of the story.

Occasionally, the narrator interjects his own thoughts, feelings, and comments into the story, reminding readers that the events of the story are in the past, but that the influence of these events still affects the narrator's life. The narrator's feelings about other characters color the reader's feelings. For example, he is skeptical of Rusty Trawler because of his actions, and so the reader is skeptical, too. Likewise, the narrator is jealous of Jose Ybarra-Jaegar, and in his jealousy we can see his true feelings for Holly. The narrator is a likeable character, which is essential for the reader to have a good experience.

## Setting

The setting of the story is New York City during World War II. Specifically, much of the action takes place in a brownstone that has been converted into apartments. The narrator and Holly live in the brownstone, and they have many of their conversations there. Also several scenes are parties that take place in Holly's apartment. The brownstone is somewhat shabby, and the tenants are diverse. This makes for delicious conflicts and even helps to move the plot along.

Several scenes take place in well-known New York spots such as Central Park and Fifth Avenue. Also mentioned are the Brooklyn Bridge and Rockefeller Center. These New York scenes are infused with obvious nostalgia. The narrator, and probably the author, have fond feelings about New York, to be sure.

There is a flashback to Holly's childhood and adolescence in Tulip, Texas, where she was taken in by Doc Golightly. These evoke a completely different feel, as Tulip, Texas, is supposed to be a back-country rural area. There is also a flashback to Holly's adolescence in Santa Anita, California, and Hollywood, where she was discovered by actor's agent O.J. Berman.

## Language and Meaning

The general language of the story is tight and spare, spiked with significant conversation. The author uses lots of brand names and slang, adding to the



cosmopolitan feel of the novel. The conversation is crude at times, which helps readers understand the characters better. Most of the characters talk the same, but when Doc Golightly comes to visit, it's obvious from his speech that he's not from New York. Instead of "children," he says, "churren." His dialect adds a dimension to Holly's background, showing how diverse her life has been.

The author makes use of italics to emphasize characters' speeches. He also uses dashes to denote Mag Wildwood's stuttering. These additional language effects emphasize the characters' eccentricities and help us to really hear their conversations. The clarity offered by these distinctions makes the text come across almost like a movie; it's so easy to picture the characters and their conversations.

## Structure

The novel is not divided into chapters, but scenes begin and end with clear divisions. This keeps the story moving along. Also, the beginning of one section is usually a very smooth transition from the last section, even answering brief questions from the end of the previous section. The novel is short and circular in some aspects. The novel begins with the narrator visiting the old brownstone where the action took place. He drops in to see Joe Bell, who thinks he has news of Holly in Africa. It's obvious from the beginning that these men are intensely interested in Holly, and the following flashbacks help the reader to understand why. The novel ends with the narrator again reminiscing about Holly, back to the present but still thinking about the past.

The plot is straightforward, but the concentration seems to be on character development more than plot. The action furthers the characters' development rather than the characters propelling the plot forward. The author is very concerned with painting pictures of the characters. Some of the best and most entertaining writing is found in the introductions to new characters, especially to O.J. Berman, Rusty Trawler, and Mag Wildwood.

Linear chronology doesn't seem to be much of a concern for the author. If he needs to interject a flashback or look forward to the future, he doesn't worry about whether we've already covered that ground. The flashbacks come at opportune times, not when they necessarily fit in to the chronology of the story.



## Quotes

"Even so, my spirits heightened whenever I felt in my pocket the key to this apartment; with all its gloom, it still was a place of my own, the first, and my books were there, and jars of pencils to sharpen, everything I needed, so I felt, to become the writer I wanted to be." Page 3

"It was a warm evening, nearly summer, and she wore a slim cool black dress, black sandals, a pearl choker. For all her chic thinness, she had an almost breakfast-cereal air of health, a soap and lemon cleanness, a rough pink darkening in the cheeks. Her mouth was large, her nose upturned. A pair of dark glasses blotted out her eyes. It was a face beyond childhood, yet this side of belonging to a woman. I thought her anywhere between sixteen and thirty; as it turned out, she was shy two months of her nineteenth birthday." Page 12

"On days when the sun was strong, she would wash her hair, and together with the cat, a red tiger-striped tom, sit out on the fire escape thumbing a guitar while her hair dried. Whenever I heard the music, I would go stand quietly by my window. She played very well, and sometimes sang too. Sang in the hoarse, breaking tones of a boy's adolescent voice." Page 16

"There wasn't a suspicion of bone in his body; his face, a zero filled in with pretty miniature features, had an unused, a virginal quality; it was as if he'd been born, then expanded, his skin remaining unlined as a blown-up balloon, and his mouth, though ready for squalls and tantrums, a spoiled sweet puckering." Page 34

"Her bedroom was consistent with her parlor: it perpetuated the same camping-out atmosphere; crates and suitcases, everything packed and ready to go, like the belongings of a criminal who feels the law not far behind." Page 49

"But the birdcage is still mine. I've lugged it to New Orleans, Nantucket, all over Europe, Morocco, the West Indies. Yet I seldom remember that it was Holly who gave it to me, because at one point I chose to forget: we had a big falling-out, and among the objects rotating in the eye of our hurricane were the bird cage and O.J. Berman and my story, a copy of which I'd given Holly when it appeared in the university review." Page 57

"Years from now, years and years, one of those ships will bring me back, me and my nine Brazilian brats. Because yes, they must see this, these lights, the river—I love New York, even though it isn't mine, the way something has to be, a tree or a street or a house, something, anyway, that belongs to me because I belong to it." Page 80

"I sat down on Holly's bed, and hugged Holly's cat to me, and felt as badly for Holly, every iota, as she could feel for herself." Page 91

"The Carey chauffeur was a worldly specimen who accepted our slapdash luggage most civilly and remained rock-faced when, as the limousine swished uptown through a



lessening rain, Holly stripped off her clothes, the riding costume she'd never had a chance to substitute, and struggled into a slim black dress." Page 101

"But one day, one cold sun-shiny Sunday winter afternoon, it was. Flanked by potted plants and framed by clean lace curtains, he was seated in the window of a warm-looking room: I wondered what his name was, for I was certain he had one now, certain he'd arrived somewhere he belonged. African hut or whatever, I hope Holly has, too.

"Later, we wandered toward Fifth Avenue, where there was a parade. The flags in the wind, the thump of military bands and military feet, seemed to have nothing to do with war, but to be, rather, a fanfare arranged in my personal honor." Page 51

"She was a triumph over ugliness, so often more beguiling than real beauty, if only because it contains paradox. In this case, as opposed to the scrupulous method of plain good taste and scientific grooming, the trick had been worked by exaggerating defects; she'd made them ornamental by admitting them boldly." Page 42



# Adaptations

In 1961 Paramount Pictures released a well-received motion picture loosely based upon *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Although Capote reportedly envisioned Marilyn Monroe as Holly, the role was played by Audrey Hepburn; the narrator (given the name of Paul Varjak in the film) was played by George Peppard. Among the other distinguished actors in the movie were Patricia Neal (as the downstairs neighbor), Buddy Ebsen (as Doc Golightly), Martin Balsam (as O. J. Berman), Alan Reed (as Sally Tomato), and Mickey Rooney (as the Japanese photographer I. Y. Yunioshi). (Additional information can be found at the following URL: <http://us.imdb.com/>.)

Capote later expressed extreme displeasure with this casting, especially with the choices of Audrey Hepburn and Mickey Rooney for their roles, and the author was even less pleased with the director, Blake Edwards. A few years before his death, Capote remarked that he hoped for a remake starring Jody Foster as Holly. Nevertheless, although probably best remembered for its musical theme "Moon River," by Henry Mancini and Johnny Mercer, the movie remains popular enough to be the subject of a web site (*Elizabeth's Breakfast at Tiffany's Website*).



## Key Questions

Modern readers are likely to consider *Breakfast at Tiffany's* dated. The outlaws resemble the cast of the musical *Guys and Dolls* more than any contemporary Mafia figures. Likewise, the attitude of Holly Golightly seems to reflect those of the 1950s beat writers and the 1960s flower children. The 1950s' greater reticence in dealing with sexual topics is also very much in evidence. In general, then, readers may choose to treat the novel as a mirror of its cultural milieu.

1. One of the most ambiguous elements in the novel is the narrator's relationship with Holly. Initially she treats him as a surrogate brother, and in some ways that relationship is maintained throughout the novel, but Joe Bell suggests that the narrator too must have harbored sexual fantasies about her, and the narrator himself suggests that he has written the novel in order to sort out his feelings. How does he actually feel about her? How does his point of view affect the reader's perception of Holly?

2. Capote was very unhappy with the motion picture treatment of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. In what ways does the novel differ from the movie? Why were these changes made in the movie version?

3. Although much of the action in the novel takes place during World War II, actually the war seems to impinge upon the action very little. How do wartime conditions affect the novel? Why has Capote chosen not to emphasize the war?

4. This novel is told essentially as a retrospective narrative, framed by the narrator's more recent contacts with Holly and her friends. What effects does Capote achieve by using this type of narrative structure?

5. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* does not appear to be a typical Capote novel. In what ways does this novel differ from his earlier novels? How can these differences be explained? In what ways is it similar to other Capote novels?

6. Reportedly one of Capote's literary rivals accused him of adopting elements from other writers and from the popular culture of the era. What are some elements that have parallels in other fiction?

Are Holly and the narrator examples of the antiheroes, or at least unlikely heroes, that were emerging in the 1950s?

7. What does Tiffany's mean to the various characters—especially Holly and the narrator? What does Tiffany's represent in today's popular culture? How has that meaning changed since the 1950s?

8. What is Holly's attitude toward money, possessions, and any type of permanence? Does the narrator continue to agree with her? Why is it significant that near the end of





the novel the narrator reveals that the cat has finally found a home? Has the narrator also found a home? Does he believe Holly has? Is he likely to be correct?

9. Although sexuality tends to be minimized and even treated somewhat ambiguously in this novel, obviously Holly makes an indelible impression upon every man she meets. Why? What does the narrator suggest about those men who are not in some way attracted to Holly?

On the other hand, why do most of the women seem to dislike her? Does their attitude reflect the 1950s stereotypes of women and their roles?

10. The novelist James Michener once wrote that Holly Golightly was patterned after a young woman with whom both he and Capote were well acquainted. Without such testimony, would Holly be a believable character? In what ways is her behavior credible? What characteristics seem exaggerated?



## Topics for Discussion

Is there a place that makes you feel perfectly calm and at ease like Tiffany's does for Holly? Is there a perfect place like this for everyone?

Discuss freedom. Can a person have too much freedom? Are there guidelines for living that make a person feel safe and secure?

What is a home? Holly's apartment is always ready for transition. Does she really have a home? If so, what is her home?

The War is mentioned several times during the story. How would the story be different if it were set during a different time period? How does the war influence the story, move the plot, and affect the characters?

Discuss the eccentricities of the characters. Each of the main characters has eccentric traits. Could every person be called eccentric in some way?

Discuss the foursome of Holly, Jose, Mag, and Rusty. None of these characters really fits in to normal society for varied reasons. What are these reasons? Do their differences help them to come together? What makes their relationships fall apart?

Why doesn't the narrator have a name? If you were to give the narrator a name, what would it be? Why?

## Literary Precedents

Holly Golightly seems to belong to the literary tradition of the picaresque or appealing nonconformist who considers society's rules simply not applicable. Her inherent innocence links her to characters like Huckleberry Finn who are not precisely truthful but also not really dishonest. On the other hand, her forthrightness about sexuality parallels that of Tom Jones (Henry Fielding, 1749).

The treatment of police and outlaws resembles that of the popular 1950s musical *Guys and Dolls*. Because Capote presents Sally Tomato and Father O'Shaughnessy almost exclusively from Holly's point of view, they appear to be characters out of Damon Runyon or even the legendary tales of Robin Hood and Friar Tuck.

## Related Titles

In technique and tone, *Breakfast at Tif fany's* resembles several of Capote's other retrospective, nostalgic fiction such as *A Christmas Memory* (1966), *The Thanksgiving Visitor* (1968), and *The Grass Harp* (1951; see separate entry), in which a young boy's progress toward adulthood is strongly influenced by an eccentric female character. The same "coming of age" motif and memoir technique recur frequently in Capote's work, from his first novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948; see separate entry) through various segments of the posthumously published *Answered Prayers* (1987).



# Copyright Information

## Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress  
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Copyright ©, 1994, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing, Inc., 2100 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994